

SICC MEETING MINUTES

Truman Building, Room 400

July 13, 2007

Members Present

Joyce Jackman
Senator Scott T. Rupp
Carissa Mattern
Lisa Robbins
Wendy Witcig

Leslie Elpers
Stacey Owsley
Kathy Fuger
Lois Sandbothe
Melinda Sanders

Debra Fiasco
Kathryn Sapp
Loletta Combs

Members Not Present

Doug Ommen
Kim Oligschlaeger

Elizabeth Spaugh

Pamela Speer

DESE Staff Present

Dale Carlson
CJ Hubbard
Stacey Ismail

Pam Thomas
Michele Schall
Charla Myers

Judy Goans

To review copies of handouts referenced in the minutes below, go to the following website: <http://dese.mo.gov/divspeced/FirstSteps/SICCpage.html> and click on “Handouts” for the July 13, 2007 meeting.

Call to Order, Welcome and Introductions – Lisa Robbins called the meeting to order at 8:40. Introductions were made.

Approval of SICC Minutes – Lisa Robbins asked for a motion to accept the minutes from the May meeting, with corrections. Stacey Owsley made a motion and Melinda Sanders seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Financial Reports – Dale Carlson reported that at the end of FY07 the First Steps program was in good shape financially as indicated on the “A” report (Monthly Expenditure/Revenue Report). There is nothing unusual or concerning to report as of the end of the fiscal year. DESE expended slightly over 22 million in First Steps in FY07, which is about 3 percent less than what was expended in FY06. For a number of years, increasing program costs have been a concern of the governor’s office as well as the legislature. We believe that we have put a structure in place to better address the identified cost and operational issues associated with First Steps. Referring to the B report (Monthly Expenditures for Direct Services by SPOE), you can see the breakout of direct services by SPOE averaged about 1.2 million per month. This downward trend in direct service costs is reflected in a similar downward trend in the December 1 child count.

The cost per child (for all children in the program with some service cost) over the past three years was: FY05-\$3,082; FY06-\$2992 and FY07-\$3078. Dale was asked by the SICC to include this information in future budget reports. A member of the council expressed concern that the number of children served continues to drop. Joyce stated that we would discuss this matter in the DESE update to follow this report. The cost per child was expressed as a concern but since program costs have been a major issue for at least the past 10 years, this downward trend in direct service costs appears to indicate that DESE has been successful in addressing this major program issue. While direct service costs are trending downward, administrative costs will continue to rise slightly primarily because the SPOE contracts increase each contract year. A member of the SICC asked if they could receive information regarding the cost per child receiving ongoing services, not including the children that are deemed ineligible. DESE will work with the CFO to see if this data is available. A member of the council said that if DESE could provide those figures annually that would be helpful.

Dale stated that the First Steps system costs as presented here may not represent total program costs because these costs do not reflect any local funds expended or the costs DMH incurs in providing 40% of the service coordination. When trying to compare Missouri First Steps to other state early intervention programs, one must take care to not make broad generalizations or comparisons of programs and/or cost data because each state has differing implementing statutes and program design/requirements. However, Missouri has made tremendous progress in program design and implementation over the past several years and currently has an early intervention program that can be looked at as a model. This state can take pride in the accomplishments of our First Steps program.

Concerning other program revenues, Dale stated that we have a little over a million dollars in insurance revenue and another \$250,000 of family participation fees that we did not have to draw down in FY07. Family participation fees appear to be fairly stable as a revenue source. Because of the complexity of the insurance reimbursement process, this revenue source may not be very stable over the long term. DESE continues to work with the Missouri Department of Insurance to resolve the many issues surrounding insurance reimbursement for early intervention.

OSEP Determinations – In June DESE received a letter from the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), regarding their determination of the state's compliance as reported in the last Annual Performance Report (APR). DESE e-mailed the letter to the SICC members. Missouri received a rating of "needs assistance", which was the rating that DESE expected to receive based on their review of the data submitted. During a national teleconference prior to the release of the letters, OSEP indicated that they recognized that states probably did not have sufficient prior information in order to collect and report data on all indicators in a manner that would meet their expectations. They also indicated that they reviewed the APRs with more leniencies this first year. DESE's letter cited two indicators (numbers 1 and 8) as the reasons for the "needs assistance" classification. Indicator 1 reports on children with IFSPs receiving their services in a timely manner. For the fiscal year reported (FY06) DESE did not have adequate procedures in place to collect that data. OSEP's directions on what data they wanted reported did not come to the states until after the 2006 fiscal year had ended. DESE now has a procedure in place to collect this data and has OSEP's acceptance for that plan. If that had been the only indicator out of compliance, it is possible that DESE would have received a "meets requirements" determination. Indicator 8 addressed Part C to Part B transition for children eligible for Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE). This indicator includes three sub-indicators and OSEP found DESE out of compliance on all three. Again, DESE recognized this area as one not meeting requirements and has implemented steps to collect better data regarding this indicator for future reporting. One of the issues involved correction of non-compliance at the regional level after a state monitoring of the regional program. When DESE reported data for the APR, three regions in the state had not corrected their non-compliance which resulted in the state reporting less than 100% compliance with the indicator. Joyce stated that she believes all areas in the state

have corrected any non-compliance with this indicator. DESE hopes to have a preliminary report to the SICC by the September or November SICC meeting regarding these indicators.

DESE Update – As of July 1 First Steps has five new First Steps Area Directors. Each director will be responsible for two SPOE regions. DESE recently hired Marcy Morrison to work with the St. Louis area and she will be starting on July 30. Marcy is currently a service coordinator with Margaret Pickett in St. Louis Region 1.

Phillips and Associates presented a draft report to DESE addressing their statistical analysis of Missouri's child count. Several sections of the report lacked clarity for the average reader and DESE requested that they revise the report to include further definition and descriptions of their findings. It appears that they have identified a range of 1.6 to 1.8 percent of the population as the target under the state's current eligibility criteria. With this report, DESE hopes to have a mechanism to determine the impact for the program if eligibility criteria were lowered. If we decide, as a state, that we should lower the eligibility criteria we will have a higher number of children to serve which means that we must have a solid provider base to meet the needs of these families and this information will be a critical piece of that discussion. As soon as DESE receives the report we will e-mail it to the SICC members and post it to our website. The Phillips and Associates report will not forecast where the population growth will be in the state of Missouri.

In September we will have more complete data for FY07. Joyce will ask the data section to do a comprehensive report for all data and include data on trends for the ECSE numbers for the same period of time.

We have had several SPOE offices that have come forward with pilot programs. Joyce has been meeting with Region 8 and 7 and Region 6 and 9 regarding pilot programs. Region 3 will be sending in a proposal at the end of the month for a pilot program. We recognize that we have regions in the state that have challenging issues related to providers available to serve children. In order to resolve some of those issues, Joyce has been talking to the Part C coordinators in other states. Georgia is one state with similar demographics to Missouri and they are using a team approach. The team approach would bring folks together with their own expertise for the benefit of the child. DESE hopes to use data from the CFO to put together a reasonable cost that the program can support if we moved to any of these proposed models.

DESE is also looking into having the SPOE offices use a standardized tool for their evaluation process. With each SPOE office using the same screening tool to determine whether or not a referral is valid it would make things more consistent in our program. OSEP is encouraging states to use screening tools. We would also like to use a standardized evaluation tool that crosses all domains to determine a child's initial eligibility for the program. If they are eligible we can move on to the assessment phase of the process where individuals from specific disciplines would evaluate the child to determine specific needs. This method should help us proceed through the process in a timelier manner. One evaluation tool that is very popular is the Developmental Assessment of Young Children (DAYC). DESE plans to investigate the DAYC further with the thought of purchasing the kits for statewide use. DESE will also work with NECTAC to see what other options might be available. A member of the council asked what the difference was between an evaluation and an assessment. Joyce said that in an evaluation you are trying to decide if the child is eligible or not; do they have a 50% delay. During assessment you further analyze the area(s) of deficit in order to better understand the current level of functioning. This assessment information is used to develop appropriate interventions.

Joyce said that the first edition of the Parent Connection newsletter will be sent out from the Central Finance Office (CFO) with the August Explanation of Benefits. DESE hopes to have two

issues this year and four issues in 2008. One family story will be included in each newsletter and the focus of the newsletter will be resources for families. The newsletter will be posted to our website with an archive of previous issues. DESE is open to any suggestions to improve the newsletter. The name Parent Connection was chosen because DESE previously had a newsletter called Provider Connection. DESE would also like to start the Provider Connection newsletter again and send it out with the Explanation of Payment as well as posting it to our website. Stacey Ismail is working on the draft for the next Parent Connection and Charla Myers did the first one.

Legislative Update – Senator Rupp said that Senate Bill 112 did pass, which removed the sunset clause for the First Steps program in the state. Also, wording in the bill was changed from “handicapped” to “children with disabilities”. The bill also implemented a pilot program allowing the RICC of the Greater St. Louis SPOE to hire a part-time child-find coordinator. The Greater St. Louis SPOE will report on the pilot by September 1, 2010 to determine the effect of hiring this child-find coordinator. Senator Rupp said his goal is to ask the governor for \$50,000 per year for marketing and the salary for this person. The other pilot project from the original bill was dropped from the final bill.

Compliance Update – CJ Hubbard reported that DESE is planning their compliance monitoring of the SPOE offices for FY08 and 09. During the SPOE Directors meeting, DESE informed the SPOE Directors which 5 offices would be monitored during FY 2008. Each year, 5 of the 10 SPOE offices will be monitored for compliance. The SPOE offices and the corresponding DMH Regional Centers will be monitored at the same time. DESE will review information obtained through interviews, desk and onsite file/data reviews, and interviews with SPOE and DMH personnel. DESE will also conduct interviews with selected providers based on concerns identified through the basic review process. The Data Coordination Section at DESE will assist in the selection of individual files from each region that will be used in the monitoring process. Compliance indicators will be judged during the desk review process and that review will direct what happened during the on-site visit. Any identified systemic noncompliance will require a corrective action plan from the applicable party (SPOE, DMH or provider). DESE will regularly monitor the web based data to make sure that the identified problems have been resolved. We don’t anticipate that we will do on-site visits for follow-ups. In FY08 DESE will monitor SPOE Regions 1, 2, 3, 6, and 9 including DMH Regional Centers serving those regions. The expectation is that monitoring will begin in October and be completed by the end of March.

CJ also reported on child complaint and due process activity for 2007 fiscal year. From July 1, 2006 through June 30, 2007 the department received 4 child complaints. One complaint was withdrawn. Out of the 7 allegations on the 3 complaints that were processed, only 1 allegation found the SPOE office out of compliance. This allegation addressed the provision of assistive technology devices in a timely manner. According to the records it took 11 weeks for the device to be received by the family, which DESE considered to be excessive. There was no corrective action taken because the family did receive the device. Also, 3 parents initiated due process with 1 being dismissed with prejudice because the hearing officer found that it was not a hearing issue. Neither party appealed that decision. DESE will provide the annual report on the complaint process at the next SICC meeting.

SPOE Operations –Niki Clover reported that the big issue for Region 6 continues to be provider recruitment. They are also concerned about meeting the 45 day timeline. They have one county in the region that has no children receiving services and no referrals for the year. Debbie Brewer reported that in Region 9 June was the first month since she has been with the program that referrals were really low.

Margaret Pickett reported for Region 1 and said that their primary problem continues to be staffing. Their office recently hired a new staff person in the city but lost one in St. Charles county.

Kathy Daulton reported for Region 4 and indicated that their challenge is their child count and referrals are really up. They are trying to balance that and keep caseloads from becoming too high. Provider shortages continue in the rural northern area.

Sarah Parker reported for Region 7 and indicated that they are fully staffed and trained. Referrals have been high and coming in steadily. Their main issue continues to be a shortage of providers and they are thrilled to be looking at a pilot program.

Jana Robinson reported for Region 5 that they are almost fully staffed and staff turnover has settled down. Their number of referrals is still incredibly high.

Diana Patton reported for Region 8 that they are working on child find. Intake caseloads have dropped recently to a more normal level. They continue to work on 45 day timelines. Provider issues are still a problem. Their region has proposed a pilot program to Joyce that will hopefully help with their provider issue.

Loletta Combs reported for Region 3 that they have very diverse provider issues in the north and west. Their office has had success in signing up people for a purchase of service agreement with their SPOE.

Old Business: Joyce reported that she is continuing to work with the Governor's Boards and Commissions office to get new members appointed to the SICC. Currently, we have Elizabeth Spaugh and Carissa Mattern as parent members but the council needs a 20 percent parent makeup, which would mean 2 additional parents. We also had to request another provider appointment to the council. We have one provider that the governor has chosen and 2 parents at the boards and commissions office being processed. Most of council is made up of appointees of state agencies. Another possible problem is that Elizabeth's son turned 12 in May, and according to the by-laws the parent member shall have a child with disabilities aged 12 or younger. The question is does she serve out her term or does her term end at the time that she is no longer in the role that she was appointed to do. We would have 2 empty seats plus Elizabeth's seat if she can no longer serve. Currently the SICC has the following provider members: Wendy Witcig first term until 2010; Val Lane's term is ending and her replacement is being processed; Lisa Robbins 2nd term will end June 30, 2010; and Leslie Elpers. Leslie was first appointed in 2002 when the council determined that they would stagger the appointments so that all appointees would not cycle off the council at the same time. Leslie's first appointment was for only 1 year and Leslie's second term technically ended on June 20, 2007. As a member of the council, Joyce said she would like to propose that Leslie remain on the council for 3 more years, since her first term was for only 1 year. Leslie said that she would agree to that. Kathy Fuger made a motion that we adjust the start and end date of Leslie Elpers two terms so that her second term will end in 2010. Wendy Witcig seconded the motion. The motion passed with Leslie Elpers abstaining. Joyce asked Carissa if she would consider being an SICC co-chair. Lisa stated that she and Elizabeth could work with Carissa to see if she would be interested in this position by orienting and preparing her. Carissa said that she would need some time to consider the position. Joyce will check with our legal council regarding the interpretation of our by-laws to see if they would prohibit Elizabeth from completing her term, even though her son has now turned 12 but is not yet 13 years old. The council will also wait to see what Elizabeth would like to do at the next SICC meeting.

RICC updates: Region 1 RICC updated the council on their various community efforts in child find. The RICC is very supportive of the Child Find Coordinator position made possible by Senate Bill 112.

Region 2 RICC reported that their sub-committees wrote up new goals for the next year and submitted them to the RICC. They reported on their recent child find activities and they are continuing to work on getting more provider membership for recruitment.

Region 3 RICC reported on their public awareness programs. Evergreen Behavioral Services, the SPOE agency for Region 3, is in the process of negotiating Purchase-of-Service Agreements with providers and provider agencies for therapy services to help with the provider issues in their area. Region 4 RICC reported that their RICC meetings are not being actively attended by any family representatives. They are continuing to focus on both child find and public awareness activities in the most northern counties of their region.

Region 5 RICC reported that they are still in the beginning stages of their formation. They are developing a questionnaire that will be sent out to current and past providers to help determine provider concerns, issues and challenges.

Region 6 RICC reported that they are still in need of representatives from the hospital/medical community and 3 parents of children in First Steps. They are concerned that they have received no referrals from Carroll County this year and discussed ways to assist with the child find efforts in that area.

Region 7 RICC reported that they are currently mailing information to the physicians in their region that describe the First Steps philosophy and encourage referrals. A survey was sent to past providers to gather information as to why they left the First Steps program.

Member issues – none

Incentives for Providers - Jenn Coleman, chairperson from RICC 7, asked about the possibility of internships as an incentive for providers and also about looking into loan forgiveness programs for providers. Joyce said that DESE does not have any control over a loan forgiveness program for providers. It was suggested that trying to encourage universities to use the First Steps modules in their teaching curriculum could help attract more providers. Lisa Robbins will talk with her colleagues at other universities across the state to encourage them to use the First Steps modules in their teaching curriculum. Kathryn Sapp said she could gather some information on loan forgiveness programs. A member of the SICC suggested that Lisa and Jenn gather information regarding interns and loan forgiveness programs and report back to the council.

It was suggested that any other projects related to provider recruitment be shared with other SPOE offices. The area directors could help in sharing this information within their regions. The purpose of the RICC reports to the SICC was so that if a person heard or saw information that might be helpful to their region they could contact that particular region. Leslie Elpers suggested that we post the RICC reports to the DESE website. It was also suggested that any changes that you would like to make to the RICC report form be sent to Judy Goans. If the RICC would like to discuss something at an upcoming SICC meeting they would need to e-mail one of the SICC co-chairs 3 weeks prior to the SICC meeting to have it added to the SICC agenda.

Report from committee Reviewing Proposed Regulations - The committee formed from the SICC members regarding the proposed Part C Regulations presented their comments regarding the changes to Part C Regulations to the SICC. Joyce reported that the committee reviewing the proposed regulations were very pleased with what they saw and had no major concerns. They did provide a few comments that could be used in a letter to OSEP. Kathy Fuger made a motion that a letter be composed by Lisa Robbins using the suggestions that the SICC review committee recommended. Wendy Witcig seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Joyce Jackman made a motion to adjourn. Leslie Elpers seconded the motion. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 2:10.